

**The Garland R. Walker American
Inn of Court Presents:**

***New York Times*
v. Sullivan at 60:
Swift Justice in Any
Era**

April 4, 2024

**The Ballroom at
The Junior League of
Houston**

**A journey through over
200 years of defamation law!**

About the Case:

New York Times v. Sullivan, 376 U.S. 254 (1964)

Argued: January 6 - 7, 1964

Decided: March 9, 1964

Facts:

In 1960, the *New York Times* printed an advertisement titled “Heed Their Rising Voices,” which detailed alleged abuses of civil rights protesters by state officials in Alabama. One of those officials, Montgomery Public Safety Commissioner L.B. Sullivan, argued that the allegations amounted to defamation and sued the *New York Times*.

Question Presented:

Did Alabama’s libel law unconstitutionally infringe on the First Amendment’s freedom of speech and freedom of press protections?

Holding:

In a unanimous opinion authored by Justice Brennan, the Court ruled for the *New York Times*. When a statement concerns a public figure, it is not enough to show that it is false for a speaker to be liable for libel. Instead, the target of the statement must show that it was made with “actual malice.” The Court explained that the target must show that the statement was made with knowledge of or reckless disregard for its falsity by clear and convincing evidence.

The Defamation Eras Tour Begins

Taylor Swift is at the height of her career, yet trouble lurks ahead. Jealous of her success, Taylor's Exes publish a scathing op-ed in the *New York Times* revealing the details of her past relationships. Can she sue them for defamation? To find out, she will need to start from the beginning.

Fearless

The Sedition Act of 1798

The year is 1798, and President John Adams is terrified of foreign wolves prowling and sowing discord amongst the American People. The Sedition Act enables the Adams Administration to prosecute printers and anyone else who would defame the government. Accused of being a wolf herself, Taylor learns the value of the constitutional guarantee of free speech, guided by the Ghost of Defamation Long Ago, Alexander Hamilton. Jim Cooper also meets his end.

Speak Now

New York Times v. Sullivan (1964)

Having narrowly escaped the *Fearless* era, Taylor accompanies the Ghost of Defamation Recent Past, L.B. Sullivan, to a front row seat as the Supreme Court hears oral argument in his case. There, an Alabama state official used the civil law of libel to punish the publication of statements critical of his official conduct. The Supreme Court holds that public figures—such as Taylor—must show that the defendant made the false statements with actual malice. That should make it all so simple, right?

Reputation

A Quiz on Current Law

It turns out to be not so simple. Returning to the present, Taylor teaches her exes a thing or two about the web of jurisprudence that sprung up in the wake of *New York Times v. Sullivan* on every lawyer's favorite gameshow, "*It Depends!*" For this portion of her journey, Taylor is guided by the Ghost of Present Dissent, Justice Clarence Thomas.

Lover

A Future Trial

Things get personal between Taylor and her Exes, who are now suing her for defamation. Accompanied by the Ghost of Future Risk, Captain Jack Sparrow, and an improbable cast of lawyers and judges, Taylor stands to lose it all.

Midnights

To Sue or Not to Sue?

It's so exhausting suing Exes as a public figure. Safely back in the present, Taylor reflects on what she has learned.

Cast

Taylor Swift	Haley Palfreyman Jankowski
Voiceover	Colin Sherrod
Lawyer 1	Madeline Schmidt
Lawyer 2	Bailey Bridges
Lawyer 3	Tara Taheri
Alexander Hamilton	Paul Rorie
John Adams	Judge Charles Eskridge
Wolf 1	Andrew Bell
Wolf 2	Cory Williams
Wolf 3	Mariame Aana
Jim Cooper	Himself
Court Clerk	Paige Fish
L.B. Sullivan	Dax Faubus
Professor Herbert Wexler	Mike Oldham
AG William Rogers	Ben Ritz
Chief Justice Warren	Jonathan Breit
Justice Douglas	Ryan Dunbar
Justice Stewart	Maha Ghyas
Justice Clark	Nicho Stevens
Justice Goldberg	Aubrie Rhodes
Justice White	Judge Charles Eskridge
Roland Nachman	Grant Martinez
Justice Brennan	Colin Sherrod
Justice Harlan	Anthony Cavender
Justice Black	Judge Christina Bryan
Interruptor	Mark Sonnier

Cast

Justice Thomas

Harry Styles

Jake Gyllenhall

Joe Jonas

John Mayer

Joe Alwyn

Jack Sparrow

Judge Judy

Elle Woods

Travis Kelce

Saul Goodman

Bailiff

Brendon Singh

Ben Rice

Garrett Carroll

Marco Graniel

Shawn Ren

J.P. Olinski

Sushant Mohan

Judge Caprice Cospers

Olivia Horton

Noah Frazier

Hugh Ray

Paul Coselli

Chorus

Alex Wolf, Andres Contreras, Paul Coselli, Aubrie Rhodes, Nefi Lopez, Adam Curley

Swifties

Jennifer Chung, Amanda Dorman, Adriana Young, Judge Jennifer Elrod, Christine Lu, Frances Williamson

Production

Kenesha Starling, Kamy Schiffman, Nathan Vrazel, Kyllie Mae Guidry

Photography and Videography

Thank you to our videographer, Alan Foster with AFS Video Services, and our photographer, Charlie Ritz.

Leadership

Finally, the pupilage group would like to thank our “*Fearless*” leaders: Jim Cooper, Judge Bryan, Judge Elrod, and Judge Eskridge for their excellent leadership, dedication, and devotion to this project. It is such a privilege for all of us to have the opportunity to be a part of the warm and enthusiastic community of legal professionals that they have brought together.

